

WTOL-TV, TOLEDO - Service to Our Community

This letter is in response to those who question local broadcasters' commitment to serving the needs and interests of their communities. Let me give you some examples of the many ways WTOL-TV in Toledo, Ohio provides community service every day.

LOCAL NEWS

WTOL-TV devotes a substantial part of its broadcast day, and millions of dollars each year, to support a community service-based local news effort.

Toledo, Ohio is a very competitive broadcast market, and we believe that to attract an audience, we need to serve our viewers with news and weather information that they will find important and useful.

Monday through Friday, our first news show begins at 5:30 AM. Early each morning, we do a full 90 minutes of news, updating the significant local stories of the day.

We do another half-hour show each weekday at noon, which, in addition to an update on local stories, features a call-in segment that offers valuable advice for viewers, free of charge, on everything from medical and legal questions to pet care.

Each weekday from 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM, our focus is again on issues of local importance, as we devote another 90 minutes to serving our community. The 5:00 PM - 6:00 PM newscast includes a special segment called NewsTalk, during which local leaders and other newsmakers come to our studios and spend several minutes, live on our air, discussing the issues of the day. As a way to enhance the importance of this segment to the community, viewers are invited to call in and ask their questions, live on our air,

Finally, at 11:00 PM, we end the day with another 35 minutes of local news to make sure our viewers are kept current on the important local news of the day, and to let them know what the next day's weather will bring.

Our commitment to our community doesn't lapse on the weekends. Quite the contrary. Saturday mornings, from 8:00 AM - 10:00 AM, WTOL airs a show that's unique in the market. "AM Saturday" is a two hour broadcast devoted almost entirely to the community, offering the day's news and weather, and a wealth of information about events coming up in our broadcast area.

"AM Saturday" reaches out to Northwest Ohio and Southeast Michigan residents by going to where they are, devoting our resources to "live shots" from the locations where the significant events of the day are taking place. In addition, in-studio guests, representing a variety of local organizations, join our host for live interviews to talk about their projects, events and concerns.

On the weekends, WTOL's local news shows at 6:00 PM and 11:00 PM are widely viewed, giving our residents the latest news, weather and local information which we believe they find valuable.

As concerned broadcasters, we continually look for ways to help improve the lives of our area residents. A tangible measure of that commitment is a special newscast segment we call, "Streets of Speed."

Each week, with the help of local authorities, we identify area roadways where speeders regularly exceed the speed limits, endangering residents. We take news crews to those locations, and using our own radar gun, clock the speeders, then pull them over, and interview them while they're still sitting in their cars. With little defense for their actions, the interviews are usually awkward and embarrassing for the drivers. We hope that by bringing attention to these dangerous roadways, and by literally confronting the problem, we can help make these neighborhoods safer.

We're delighted that the Cleveland Chapter of the National Association of Television Arts and Sciences recognized our efforts by awarding "Streets of Speed" a regional "Emmy."

WTOL.COM

More and more, our website, WTOL.COM, is becoming a valuable resource for our community. Each day, we update the significant news of the day, but that's just the beginning. Thanks to new technologies, we are able to customize our local weather forecasts for specific addresses provided by our web users. This service is provided free of charge to anyone who visits WTOL.COM.

The new web technologies help us provide another valuable community service to our visitors. Computer users who miss our broadcast news shows can watch the major news stories of the day on their computers, thanks to a process called "video streaming." And for web users whose time is extremely limited, we provide an additional service. On our web site, we "video stream" abbreviated newscasts and weather forecasts called, "News at Your Desk" and "Weather at You Desk," respectively. Many WTOL.COM visitors tell us these services are especially valuable.

AT WTOL.COM, we also provide a special service called, "Ask the Expert," where members of our community can get answers to questions covering a variety of fields. Our experts' specialties include information about retirement issues, home health care, education, finance, the law, plastic surgery, dental health, drug and alcohol addiction, and even landscaping.

WTOL.COM is a place where area residents can express themselves on a variety of issues. Through regular polls and forums, we sample residents' opinions on issues including local politics, gas prices, education, terrorism, employment, and the economy. Frequently, their responses are used in news stories on our air.

One very active part of our web site is the WTOL.COM Community Calendar, a comprehensive listing of events taking place in our viewing area. To insure the calendar is as complete as possible, contributions to the calendar are made in two ways. First, three WTOL-TV staff members are assigned the responsibility of regularly adding content. What makes this truly a "community" calendar is the fact that everyone visiting the web site is given the opportunity to contribute. By filling out a simple form, any user can electronically submit information about an upcoming event to our webmaster for inclusion.

FREE TIME FOR POLITICAL CANDIDATES

In this important election year, WTOL-TV has created a variety of opportunities for political candidates to enjoy free access to our airwaves.

Daily attention to key races is paid through our news programming. Going well beyond, WTOL-TV has created special programming to help keep viewers informed. This month, we're preempting two hours of CBS prime-time programming with special programs intended to help viewers make informed decisions at the polls. Saturday, October 16, 2004, we broadcast an hour-long debate between the four candidates vying for two seats in a hotly-contested Lucas County Commissions race. This event, which took place in front of a live audience at an area high school, was hosted by two of our main news anchors.

On Saturday, October 23, 2004, we preempted CBS again to air "Campaign '04: Battleground Ohio." This unique broadcast, hosted by one of our news anchors, featured a number of Toledo's undecided voters who let us talk to them about the critical local and national campaigns. This forum truly served the public interest because average members of our community were the focus of the broadcast.

In addition, for a series of four Sundays in October, we broadcast special locally-produced half-hour political programs called, "Meet the Candidates." Each featured candidates from a number of local political races. Each "Meet the Candidates" program aired immediately following CBS' "Face the Nation," capturing the politically savvy audience that's available in this Sunday morning daypart.

Ohio, termed a "swing state" in the presidential election, has been visited frequently by the leading presidential and vice presidential candidates. Each time a candidate visits our area, that person is prominently featured in our local news shows.

In a unique effort to give average viewers a voice, seven days before the presidential election, we sent a news anchor, a producer and a photographer on the road to visit dozens of smaller communities around our area. For five days, our crew produced live reports from more than a dozen of these small, outlying communities. Each report featured interviews with northwest Ohio and southeast Michigan residents telling us what they thought about the presidential race, the candidates and their own voting plans.

As a way to provide additional service to our audience, we've developed a comprehensive election guide and made it available on WTOL.COM. Full profiles of all of the major races are found there, along with a database of area polling places and transcripts of presidential debates.

Needless to say, WTOL and WTOL.COM will shine on election night, with more than 6 hours of continuous election coverage on our air, and results from more almost 1000 local races on our website.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

Perhaps nothing is more important to a television audience than reliable, up-to-the-minute information about severe weather. We pride ourselves on our devotion to providing severe weather information. We have linked our live local radar to

a network of regional radars to give viewers a wide-area view of approaching weather. This month, we premiered the latest in weather display technology to help communicate the weather story even more effectively to our viewers.

The National Emergency Alert System and the new Amber Alert System are immediately routed on-air when either system is activated.

WTOL.COM offers emergency weather information to users in two ways. Browsers who come to our web site are invited to sign-up for the "Weather Wizard" and for emergency weather paging. The "Weather Wizard," a free service on our web site, automatically scrolls emergency weather information across the bottoms of our users' computer screens.

Through our automatic emergency weather paging system, as soon as weather warnings are issued, we e-mail the information to our visitors' pagers and cell phone displays. This important weather notification service is also provided to our users at no charge.

CALL FOR ACTION OFFICE

We are proud of the WTOL-TV Call for Action Office, a team of volunteers based here at the station, whose sole purpose is to help community members by serving as consumer advocates. Each week, our volunteers deal with consumer issues ranging from automobile warranty problems, to credit problems, to city services problems and legal advice. By our estimate, our Call for Action volunteers have saved area residents more than \$1.4 million dollars over the last four years!

VIEWER COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

We want our relationship with our viewers to be a two-way street. On our web site and on our air, we encourage viewers to contact us with their questions and concerns. Viewer mail, whether received conventionally or via e-mail, is saved and made available in our public file.

"PARTNERS IN COMMUNITY CARING" PROJECTS

For the last four years, WTOL, along with a major health services provider in the area, has sponsored "Partners in Community Caring." This multi-faceted public service campaign is intended to serve the community in a variety of ways. Some recent "Partners in Community Caring" projects include:

Help Our Senior Neighbors Day. Toledo has a large, elderly population. Working with the Area Office on Aging, WTOL rallied hundreds of volunteers to clear away brush, trim bushes, mow lawns and wash windows at the homes of dozens of Toledo area shut-ins.

Scouting for Food. For the last two years, WTOL has worked with a local food bank and the Boy Scouts of America to collect non-perishable food items for needy families. More than 150,000 pounds of food were collected and distributed each year, thanks to the generosity of our viewers.

Read to Succeed. With the help of the Toledo Area Council of Girl Scouts, over a two year period, this effort collected more than 50,000 new and slightly used books for children of needy families.

Tools for School. Working with the local chapter of the Salvation Army, WTOL-TV asked viewers to contribute school supplies for needy children. For the second year in a row, enough pens, pencils, notebooks, glue, crayons and boxes of facial tissue were collected to fill more than 1,500 backpacks for deserving school children.

RACE FOR THE CURE

For almost a decade, WTOL news anchor Chrys Peterson has made the fight against breast cancer a personal commitment. The signature event of the Toledo Chapter of the Susan G. Komen Foundation is the annual race through downtown Toledo. This year, the 10th anniversary for the Toledo Race for the Cure, more than 13,000 runners turned-out to help Peterson raise money for this important cause. More than 400 public service announcements were broadcast by WTOL-TV to support this important project.

THE "POWER OF PINK"

This year, WTOL added a unique new element to our ongoing effort to fight breast cancer. The "Power of Pink" campaign was created to aggressively spread the word about the importance and effectiveness of breast self-examination. Viewers were encouraged to visit WTOL.COM and sign-up for a free "Pink Pack" full of valuable information about the role early detection plays in thwarting the growth of breast cancers. As an enticement, each packet contained an assortment of fun pink items, including an attractive multi-hued pink scarf, a pink pen, pink stickers and "Race for the Cure" sign-up information. Was it effective? We think so. Almost 10,000 packets were distributed!

ALZHEIMER'S MEMORY WALK

For the past three years, the Alzheimer's Association Memory Walk has been a major station public service commitment for WTOL. This year, news anchor and honorary event chair, Tess Rafols, led the walk, which drew hundreds of concerned area residents to the Toledo Zoo to help raise money for Alzheimer's research. More than 100 public service announcements were broadcast by WTOL to support this important event.

PERSONAL COMMITMENT

In addition to our on-air efforts, WTOL staff members provide untold numbers of volunteer hours to support area non-profit organizations. Some of the organizations our staff members serve include: The United Way, The Susan G. Komen Foundation, The Mercy Health Partners Foundation, The Multiple Sclerosis Society, The Alzheimer's Association, The American Red Cross, Planned Parenthood, The Boy Scouts of America, Toledo MetroParks, The Cherry Street Mission, The Family and Child Abuse Prevention Center, The Salvation Army, The Epilepsy Center, The Ability Center, Boys and Girls Clubs of Toledo, and an array of area churches.

IN CONCLUSION

Serving our community's needs and interests is at the heart of our mission as broadcasters. Every day, we look for more and better ways to serve our area, with the goal of making northwest Ohio and southeast Michigan a better place to live.

Steve Israel
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